

Congressional Notes

It Pays To Be Wise About Public Phones

Operator Service Providers (OSPs) provide long distance service -- and in some cases local telephone services -- from pay telephones or telephones located in public places such as hotels, motels and hospitals.

The FCC has adopted rules to ensure that interstate OSP services are provided to consumers in a fair and reasonable manner.

Here's some information your constituents should know about OSPs:

☆ The OSP providing service for a public telephone generally will handle a call if "0" is dialed before dialing any other number.

☆ The FCC's rules guarantee your constituents the right to place calls from a public telephone through the long distance company they want to use by dialing an access code -- such as an 800 number, a local number that begins with 950, or a seven-digit access number known as a 101-XXXX number.

Federal law prohibits blocking of 800 or 950 access to long distance companies from public telephones.

☆ The OSP will require your constituents to charge a call to a calling card, call collect, or bill the call to a third party when coins are not used to pay for the call.

☆ OSPs are required to immediately connect emergency calls to the appropriate emergency service.

☆ OSPs cannot bill for unanswered calls in areas where equal access (1+) service is available, nor can the OSP knowingly bill for unanswered calls where equal access is not available.

Sometimes an unanswered call will register as a billed call due to the equipment used by local telephone companies in areas where equal access is not available.

